

By: Representative Allen West

Much has been made of my recent response to a question from a constituent and assertion regarding so-called “communists” in the Congressional Progressive Caucus. I am pleased it has inspired so much passionate debate, for that was precisely the point.

When I was studying for my two master’s degrees in political science at Kansas State University and at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff Officer College, the very best professors were those who would begin each lecture with a challenging assertion. It engaged discussion and analysis, and was the best way to uncover the essence of the particular subject of the day.

As Americans, we must bring to the fore this fundamental discussion of what we want our country to be. Do we veer from our Founders’ vision of a constitutional republic that preserves and protects the individual sovereignty of its citizens, along with the free market and the rights of the several states, or do we continue to slide down this path of expanding the secular welfare state, nationalizing production and enforcing economic equality?

My colleagues in the Congressional Progressive Caucus have taken umbrage with my equation of their ideals with those of communists. Why? Why shouldn’t we have this discussion? What part of their agenda are they trying to hide?

We must be able to openly discuss how our fundamental freedoms are being slowly chipped away by an over-reaching nanny state that has bit by bit slipped its tentacles into every aspect of our lives, from the types of light bulbs we can use to the size of our toilet tanks.

We must be able to challenge the mandates being handed down by un-elected officials, which threaten our constitutional right to practice religion however we see fit.

We must be able to question tax policies predicated on “fairness” that punish job creators and do virtually nothing to reduce our spiraling debt and deficit.

Specific “party” affiliation is not the point of the discussion — it is rather affiliation with a set of ideals. Conservatives adhere to the ideals of individual responsibility and freedom, limited government, a free market and a strong defense. Those on the liberal left adhere to a collective ideal, directed and controlled by a centralized government to guarantee and enforce social and economic justice.

You can call this what you wish. The esteemed scholar and author Mark Levin calls it “statism.” In our lifetime, the unpalatable and pejorative brands “socialist” and “communist” have been replaced with the more user-friendly “progressive” term.

But this is not a discussion about labels. It is a discussion far more important and grave, for it affects our nation’s future, our security and each and every one of us. The dialogue must be about the future and direction of these United States. It is about the choice between two futures: a constitutional republic or a bureaucratic nanny-state.

As a nation, we must directly confront those issues that are most critical. We must be able to openly and candidly discuss how we will move forward to preserve our nation’s greatness, reduce our debt and deficit, put Americans back to work, take full advantage of our domestic energy resources and ensure our security.

I do not believe we can achieve those goals with larger and larger government, centralized economic planning and redistribution of wealth. Those methods have failed miserably everywhere they are been tried. I will not stand by and watch this nation I love be remade slowly into a government-directed, bureaucratic collective — whether it is termed communist, socialist, progressive or any-other-ist.

I am not a politician by trade. I learned to communicate on the battlefield, where “nuance” is not at all useful and can in fact be dangerous, if not fatal.

These are dangerous and critical times for our country. We must be unafraid to discuss and confront the challenges we face and ensure we keep our focus on the fundamental issues rather than become distracted by semantics. I gladly welcome this debate in the arena of

political ideologies of governance.

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